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ABSTRACT

It is generally accepted that effective principals make for effective schools. In the United Kingdom, the key player providing needed intelligence, vision, energy, and thinking is called the headteacher. The issue considered broadly in this paper is educational leadership in the UK. It addresses the critical role of the headteacher and how to ensure that English schools will continue to receive solid direction to ensure student achievement. The paper begins with a review of recent government efforts to recognize the central importance of headteachers, and describes current practices and analyzes their effectiveness. The paper then presents a list of fundamental assumptions: Briefly, there is a shortage of qualified candidates for headships, and the situation is likely to get worse unless corrective steps are taken. Based, then, on the stated observations and assumptions, the paper makes the following recommendations for policymakers: (1) Upgrade the traditional apprenticeship model to incorporate the skills needed for the modern headship; (2) include peer coaching, or lateral support, in current mentoring programs; (3) help current and aspiring headteachers develop a personal educational platform, or philosophy of education; and (4) provide targeted learning experiences, or training, for current and aspiring headteachers. (Contains 10 references.) (WFA)

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PLUSES AND MINUSES OF BRITISH HEADTEACHER REFORM: TOWARD A VISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

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PLUSES AND MINUSES OF BRITISH HEADTEACHER REFORM: TOWARD A VISION OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

While debate rages over what constitutes "effectiveness" in many areas of school practice, one established fact has remained constant for many years. Regardless of discussions related to curriculum, pupil assessment, textbooks, grading procedures, or many other issues, no sustained improvement of schooling will ever take place without strong leadership demonstrated by the leaders of individual schools. (Mortimer, et al., 1979) To paraphrase and translate the work of James Lipham (1981), "Effective principals (headteachers) make for effective schools."

This observation is anything but new and cutting edge. For more than a quarter of a century, researchers from around the world have understood that there is a critical need for visionary, thoughtful, energetic, and intelligent leaders to serve at the delivery level of any large or small organization, whether the organization is a small primary school or a huge multinational organization (Peters and Waterman, 1979; Bennis and Nanus, 1985). In the context of English educational practice, the key player in providing needed intelligence, vision, energy, and thinking is the headteacher. The issue considered broadly in this paper, therefore, concerns that critical role and how to ensure that British schools will continue to receive effective direction to ensure effective student learning throughout this current millennium.

That "continuity of care" for educational leadership is the subject of this paper. First a review of recent efforts by the government to recognize the central importance of effective headteachers will be presented. Along with a description of current practice, an analysis of apparent effectiveness of these approaches will be provided. Second, assumptions made the authors of this paper will be listed as they have a significant impact on the direction of the remaining pages. Third, based on the stated assumptions and the nature of the review of existing improvement efforts, a series of recommendations for policy development are noted. The paper concludes with a possible research agenda that would be directed toward the continuing monitoring of proposed changes in practices.

Improving the Headship: State of the Art in England

Despite the continued growth of the managerial and administrative responsibility of headteachers throughout the last 150 years, little thought has been given to examining how teachers will be developed into the role. Baron (1956: 299) cites the work of W.O.Lester Smith (1950) as the sole example of any written evidence in this respect. Smith, in a paper published by the University of London Institute of Education, tentatively suggested:

> ... that teachers of experience should be able to follow courses designed to illuminate in a liberal way problems of educational organisation and administration [and that] such courses should serve education much as the Staff College serves the Army as a preparation for leadership.

In recent times, the headteacher has been viewed as the pivotal figure and lynchpin of the school (DES, 1977; Weindling and Earley, 1987; DfEE, 1998). Despite this recognition, however, there has not been a corresponding and sustained central government initiative for improving the management and leadership skills of headteachers. The history of the preparation and continuing professional development (CPD) of headteachers in England has been described by closely associated observers as "patchy" (Bolam, 1997: 227), "haphazard" (Bush, 1999: 244) and "disjointed and insubstantial" (Male, 1997: 6) with most headteachers having to learn the requirements of the role 'on the job'. All initiatives until the 1990s failed both to define the role and to reach a high enough proportion of school leaders to make a difference (School Management Task Force, 1990).

The net result of this in terms of preparation for headship traditionally has been for the majority of prospective candidates to secure their own development opportunities, generally through school based experience supplemented by attendance at various formal training programmes. By no means has there been any consistency across the nation and the sole determinant of headteacher role has been the hiring body which, since the Education Reform Act of 1988, has been the governing body in all schools.

It was not until the establishment of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), a non-departmental governing body, in 1994 that we saw any concerted effort to institute a holistic approach to the preparation, induction and continuing professional

development of headteachers. Charged with all aspects of teacher education and supply the TTA soon in action with the implementation of an induction programme for headteachers, the Headteacher Leadership and Management Programme (Headlamp), in 1995 which provided an entitlement to central funds for those appointed to their first headship. Headlamp was the first part of a three fold strategy for improving headteacher capability and was introduced hurriedly at the beginning of the TTA's term of office at the behest of the Secretary of State for Education who, keen for there to be evidence of a tangible effort to improve the quality of headteachers, announced the introduction of the scheme in November, 1994, with a start date of September, 1995. This was a move which required the TTA to establish quickly the criteria for eligibility of both the participants and of providers, together with suitable mechanisms for managing and administering the scheme.

Headlamp was characterised by the definition of skills and attributes deemed to be necessary for fulfillment of the headship role. Eligible candidates were expected to undergo a needs assessment exercise against these skills and attributes in order to define their own CPD programme which would subsequently be funded by the entitlement grant. A feature of the scheme was the liberty provided to each newly appointed headteacher to establish their own programme of induction and development, governed only by the requirement for them to spend at least 80 per cent of available grant on providers registered and approved by the TTA. The scheme is still continuing, largely unchanged, at the time of writing.

The TTA had managed to adopt a more measured approach to its CPD programme by 1997 when it introduced its pilot scheme for headteacher preparation, the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). This scheme, the second part of their package for improving headship performance, built upon the skills and attributes identified for Headlamp to create a set of national standards for headteachers (TTA, 1998) which were refined and published through the pilot and trials stages of the new qualification. NPQH is a professional qualification, based on the national standards, that requires successful candidates to exhibit 8 leadership attributes, 27 skills and 15 aspects of professional knowledge and understanding that operate within a concept of the core purpose and five key outcomes of headship. From these standards it is deemed possible to make an assessment of the capability of a prospective or serving headteacher. All assessments, training and development associated with the programme were run through regional centres working under contract to the TTA.

NPQH has undergone a number of changes since the trials and piloting in 1997 when it was configured as a three year programme with few possibilities for exemption. The programme was reviewed in 1999 and now runs for a maximum of maximum of one year from induction. Options also exist for an accelerated (one-term) route for 'fast-track' candidates. By May, 1999 a total of 5668 candidates (DfEE, 1999) had registered for NPQH in five cohorts with another round of recruitment scheduled for the period between May to July. The ratio of recruitment

was 11.2:8.3:1 (Primary, Secondary, Special) against a national requirement of 16:4:1, an outcome which demonstrated the dominance of those from the secondary sector. The government has now made provision for the NPQH to become mandatory by 2002.

The third element of headteacher CPD envisaged by the TTA is the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH) which was introduced in 1998. The LPSH model is based on research conducted by Hay McBer Associates, a consultancy firm with a history of management development in the business/commercial world, into the nature of leadership effectiveness in schools. The programme aims to develop headteachers who are capable of leading improving schools. The target audience, which is also based on the national standards, is those who have been in post for several years who, through a process of self and peer evaluation, will be in a position to undertake a critical review of their leadership style and practice. Candidates undertaking LPSH receive full financial support for the evaluation and subsequent development programme which consists of a four day residential session supplemented by continued support, including the appointment of a mentor from the world of business and commerce, through the following year.

Responsibility for all three programmes has now been transferred to the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) which opened in the autumn of 2000. The quinquennial review of the TTA (Department for Education and Employment [DfEE], 1999: 30) had recommended that responsibility for the in-

service education of teachers should revert to the DfEE, with the National College to be responsible for headship training and development, once established. The main reason for the TTA losing the initiative is attributed to the robust adversarial attitude exhibited to those with whom it worked. As the review indicated, the agency attracted praise and criticism in large measures from its partners (DfEE, 1999: 16) and "made few friends in the process".

Assumptions

While the practices set forth in this paper may be applied to a considerably wider range of groups and circumstances, fundamental assumptions guiding our work include the following:

- The primary audience for proposed training and developmental practices are defined as deputy heads in the earliest stages (i.e., first two or three years) of their service in that role.
- Recommended policies and procedures must be consistent with the recognition that, regardless of possible explanations of the current state of affairs, there is now a shortage of qualified candidates for roles of heads of England'schools. Unless proactive measures are taken now and in the immediate future, this situation is likely to become worse.
- Any effort improve practice must involve collaboration by all parties: local education authorities, institutions of higher education, the national government, and both practicing and potential aspiring heads.

- There is a value to both theoretical and practical knowledge (Hart & Bredeson, 1998) as away to guide effective development.
- Any effort to guide the development of more effective future leadership practice must be guided by the recognition that whatever leadership skills may be needed for today must be appreciated as limited by the fact that the challenges of an unforeseeable future will likely change the nature of effective practice (with acquisition of requisite knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values) to address the challenges of that unpredictable time.
- Regardless of other changes that may occur, the centrality of individual school leadership will remain a constant factor for effectiveness. The head will continue to be a key player in schools.

Recommendations

Based on the assumptions and observations stated above, the following recommendations are offered as a way to enhance the quality of preservice, induction, and ongoing inservice education of headteachers. Preservice is defined as the period of time after which an individual has made a personal comitment to seek a headship at some point in the future. This period of professional development concludes when that same individual is actually appointed to the role of headteacher for the first time. In this view, preservice preparation is not confined to traditional learning experiences associated with a career path ending in the headship (i.e., head of department or grade level, assisrtant head, deputy head, or other similar

preparatory experiences). Rather it begins when an individual educator decidesthat he or she wishes to proceed down a career path resulting in appointment as a head at some undetermined point in the future.

Traditional definitions of induction suggest that this phase of professional development is limited to the first year of service in a new professional role. That perspective is inconsistent with our views. Instead, induction in this paper is understood as a period of initial professional entry defined not by a period of time, but rather by an individual's ability to be socialized into a new occupational role. It may be a period of time far less than one year, in fact. Or it may involve three or more years. The point is, induction must be understood as a process differentiated according to the learning needs of the individual person moving into a new role. Admittedly, this definition is not precise and leads to difficulties in designing "induction programmes." But if the goal of professional development in general is to serve the needs of the learner, standardized package programmes are not likely to have long-term positive impact.

Ongoing inservice education is understood as the total of all learning experiences in which a practicing school leader might be engaged during the course of a career. In a sense, for British deputy and assistant heads, preservice preparation and ongoing inservice education are simultaneous activities, much as induction is at least in part classified as ongoing inservice as well.

Strategies

Whether the immediate goal is preservice preparation, induction, or ongoing inservice education, there are several recommended strategies proposed as a way to assist educational leaders acquire the skills needed to ensure that they are able to learn not only the technical skills associated with their assigned roles, but more importantly, achieve more success in the critical domains of self awareness and professional socialization. Four approaches that are suggested here are reflective internships, mentoring, personal educational platform development, and targeted learning experiences such as academies. These activities are not suggested as a sequential process, but rather elements that might comprise a comprehensive approach to professional development over time.

Reflective Internships

The traditional model for career development followed by those aspiring to hold headships in English schools has been described best in terms of an apprenticeship. Classroom teachers achieve roles with increasing amounts of professional responsibility, such as head of grade level, head of academic department, then on to coordinator of assessment, assistant head , and eventually to the deputy headship. At each stage of this developmental process, it is assumed that the individual will acquire an increasingly important set of skills that may eventually be applied in the role of the headteacher. Thus, people learn by observing others and by doing such things as conducting meetings, working with parents and community

groups, budgeting, planning, and myriad activities that will be a part of their future world as a headteacher in a school. This model has served well for many years as craft knowledge and technical skills associated with successful performance of traditional duties of heads have been passed on from one generation to the next.

The problem, of course, is that the traditional definition of headship is now changing radically, consistent with new expectations being placed on schools and their leaders. No doubt, future heads will need to be able to carry out many of the responsibilities always attached to the role. Aspects of technical skills are endemic to any managerial role in virtually any organization. These skills understandably serve as the focus of the current approaches to school leadership management development proposed in England. Consider, for example, the "Professional Knowledge and Understanding" expected of heads, according to the National Standards for Headteachers (DfEE, 2000, 7-10):

Headteachers should have knowledge and understanding of:

a. what constitutes quality in educational provision, the characteristics of effective schools, and strategies for raising pupils' achievement and promoting their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development and their good behaviour;
b. strategies to achieve effective teaching and learning of literacy and numeracy;
c. the application of information and communications technology to teaching and learning, and management;

d. how to use comparative data, together with information about pupils' prior attainment, to establish benchmarks and set targets for improvement;

e. requirements and models for the curriculum and its assessment;

f. effective teaching and assessment methods, including the use of information and communications technology;

g. political, economic, social, religious, and technological influences which have an impact on strategic and operational planning and delivery;

h. leadership styles and practices and their effects in different contexts within the school;

i. management, including employment law, equal opportunities legislation, personnel, external relations, finance, and change;

j. the national policy framework and the complementary roles and functions of government and national bodies;

k. the statutory framework for education now in place, and its importance to the key tasks of headship;

l. the implications of information and guidance documents from LEAs,

m. governance at national, local, and school levels;

n. the contribution that evidence from inspection and research can make to professional and school development;

o. strategies for teaching pupils about the duties, opportunities, responsibilities and rights of citizens;

p. strategies for teaching pupils about ethnic and cultural diversity.

There is little possible doubt that the items listed above are important pieces of that might be known by anyone planning a career in the headship of school. Interestingly enough, however, as stated here, each of the 16 items of professional knowledge are all presented at a level far from actual implementation or application In other words, they are all specifications of "what" ought to be known by a headteacher. The use of a mentoring scheme in conjunction with heateacher development as a way to acquire this type of learning would likely be an inappropriate application oft his practice. Rather, one might easily argue that learning about "governance at national, local, and school levels" might be best accomplished through reading books on this topic.

Mentoring

The concept of providing a senior role models to assist junior colleagues has been a practice advocated in many organizations for years. Often, it is assumed that the role model, or mentor, would be a person with many years of past experience in the field, and that the person being mentored (often termed a "protégé") would be a newcomer to the organization. As a result of this type of traditional assumption, mentoring programs to assist new headteachers (and principals in the US) have been launched frequently in recent years. In the UK, such an effort came about to assist newly appointed heads in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with a great deal of support from the School Management Task Force (SMTF). Follow up studies of regionally

developed mentoring schemes for headteachers (Bolam, Weindling, & Pocklington, 1990) demonstrated rather uneven results derived from the reliance on experienced headteachers as effective strategies to assist in the induction of new school leaders.

Perhaps it is time to think of the use of mentoring programmes for headteachers in somewhat different terms. Instead of proposing mentoring as a way simply to assist individual "survive" the first year or two of headship, it may be important to conceptualize this form of one-to-one assistance as a technique that may begin to pay dividends for experienced as well as neophyte heads. In this way, the model suggested would be more of peer coaching, or lateral support. If the goal of effective professional development is to assist leaders in moving beyond survivorship and moving toward instructional leadership, the peer coaching process might team up pairs (or small groups) of headteachers working in common. Even the most experienced school leaders have areas in which they might improve their skills and abilities. As training programmes for heads in the UK have increasingly focused on managerial, rather than leadership, development, finding experienced colleagues as legitimate role models may be a most important and vital way of moving from a vision of technical skill attainment to leadership development.

Educational Platform Development

Those who are responsible for managing schools have a fundamental choice to make as they step into their roles as headteachers, principals, or whatever job they are assuming. In short, the choice that is the foundation for much of what they do is

between serving only to satisfy the technical needs of the school as an organization (maintaining the physical plant, hiring personnel, scheduling, budgeting, and so forth) and the instructional and learning priorities of the school. Clearly, most heads and others would no doubt want to be in perfect balance between these two often-competing images of their duties. The fact is, however, that there is a constant "tug-of-war" that most leaders in schools face. On one hand, they are to "keep the ship afloat" with sound management practice. On the other hand, they are to serve as instructional leaders and visionaries.

The recent reforms of the headship in the UK, as we have noted earlier, have tended to focus on a vision of effectiveness defined largely by the ability to carry out the technical duties assigned to headteachers. But there is a great opportunity for individual headteachers to carve out their own role definitions by focusing largely on learning, teaching, and curricular concerns. The key, however, will be in the ways in which individuals define their jobs and duties. It is at this point where the importance of individuals developing a clear personalized image of what they are "supposed to do" becomes very relevant.

For years, we have suggested that an important activity for every educational leader—whether newly appointed or with several years of experience—involves the periodic reflection on personal values and priorities (Daresh, 2001). The activity suggested to assist the individual in this regard is the development of a personal educational platform, or philosophy of education. There is nothing new about this

suggested approach to defining leadership priorities. Earlier proponents of this activity included Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988) who suggested that effective leaders would consider personalized responses to the following issues as a way to guide their activities in schools:

1. The aims of education
2. The major achievements of students this year.
3. The social significance of the student's learning.
4. The leader's image of the learner.
5. The value of the curriculum
6. The leader's image of the teacher.
7. The preferred kind of pedagogy.
8. The primary language of discourse in learning situations.
9. The preferred kind of teacher-student relationships
10. The preferred kind of school climate.
11. The purpose or goal of administration or management.
12. The preferred process of administration or management.

How a person responds to these and other critical issues in education provides that person with insights into what may be termed "non-negotiable values," to the extent that a person might say, "I cannot absolutely abide by any action or decision that would be contrary to ..." It is through this type of periodic thoughtful and candid self-analysis that the headteacher may be able to engage in a deliberate action of

selecting what activities are personally more important to complete at different points in his or her career. For example, a strong belief (or platform "plank") holding that "all administrative decisions must be made in light of what is best for students," would no doubt let a head appreciate that it is more important to focus limited time of talking with and learning about student backgrounds, rather than installing a new computer lab in the school. Bot activities are important, but each takes a great deal of time. It is important to make choices, and the platform is a way to help individuals select appropriate alternatives.

Targeted Learning Experiences

Finally, if we are to find headteachers who are going to have a continuing positive impact on student learning, opportunities for learning how to do this must be available. If we are to assume that schools will be more effective if leaders direct their attention toward improving learning for students, then these leaders need to receive training directed toward that goal. In the United States and the UK, however, there are contradictions in practice that make this recommendation somewhat difficult to realize.

Headteachers normally step into their role from the role of deputy headteacher, just as many principals serve as assistant principals before taking over their own schools. During service as deputies, they are exposed to learning about a wide array of technical duties often assigned to those who assist headteachers. They spend a great percentage of their time in such areas as student discipline, facilities

management, budgeting, and so forth. They become quite skilled as managers of schools. Unfortunately, when they move to the next level of their careers, they are confronted with the demands of providing for greater oversight of the instructional program. They must leave their worlds as managers and step in as leaders when they are handed the keys to their own schools. A suggestion in this regard may involve the development of concentrated and focused learning experiences directed primarily toward the needs of deputies who are on track to become headteachers. An example of this type of effort might be found in some recent work in the United States related to the creation of assistant principal academies that are meant to open assistants to new thinking and visions that extend beyond keeping the ship on the water (Daresh & Vass, 2001).

Conclusion

Through this paper, we have reviewed the very well-intentioned efforts of many agencies and policies in the UK, all of which have been directed toward trying to improve schooling by improving the leadership capabilities of headteachers. There is no question that this type of link is well-intended. Efforts to find more effective ways to prepare individuals for the great challenges associated with running a school are welcome. But it is quite clear that there have been limitations to may of the best intentions.

We have reviewed the efforts to bring about change and found that there have been mixed results. But the activities attempted to date have some great basis for

adding to the quality of educational practice across England. In order to make these improvements more likely, we have also noted some additional areas for reform and renewal of the roles and responsibilities of school leaders.

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